1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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sickness is a pious deed. It is often told to a sick person that holy people have suffered from one ailment or another and have endured it willingly for God.

All this shows how the villagers' traditional notions about health and sickness are mixed with magical and religious beliefs; God is the afflicter as well as the healer; it is He who has fixed the life span of every person, and this cannot be lengthened or precipitated by a second, much less a minute, unless He wills it. Together with this, there is the belief that hope and propitiation cannot fail to produce some expected results in certain crises of life.

The village has experienced some measure of direct contact with modern medicine as a result of the establishment of a health unit by the Ministry of Health in 1936. This health unit is a wonderful building, situated on the southern border of the village, and is composed of a maternity section, an isolation ward, and a general section. It cost the Government about £E3,000, yet it has never functioned properly or systematically as doctors who came to it could hardly endure life in the village for more than six months, whereupon they tried every possible means to be transferred to towns. The villagers appreciated the health unit at the beginning, but their resentment to it was ironically aroused during the malaria and typhoid epidemic of 1943 on the grounds that sick people were taken away to the isolation ward, and dying away from one's relatives and home is the worst thing that can happen to any person. Their hostility towards it is expressed with reference to its unfortunate location, it being near the cemetery; thus going to the health unit has become psychologically a bad omen. However, the establishment of the health unit has given folk-medicine the greatest challenge, and at present the villagers are becoming increasingly interested in medicine as such, alongside their usual traditional cures. In serious cases the doctor's help is usually sought besides the traditional cures, and it is becoming a sign of social prestige to bring him into the home of the sick; but remaining in hospital for treatment or isolation for contagious diseases is still resisted.

Although one finds that the villagers have adopted certain items of material culture from the town, such as the use of manufactured goods, new types of vegetables, and some medicines, such adoption is a surface substitution. Their ideas about land ownership, the importance of children, family and clan solidarity, categories of respect relationships, sex dichotomy, supernatural sanctions, and the importance of ritual and ceremony in both social and religious life, remain almost unaltered.

There is, however, one feature in the village's social life that has undergone a certain amount of change as a result of changes in the economic conditions, and that is the role and function of leadership. Till very recently leadership has been mainly connected with families owning large plots of land; and such families assumed the responsibility and obligation for receiving guests from outside the village, providing hospitality for

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municipal or provincial government officials, and representing the village in government affairs. The Omda of the village is elected on the basis of his land property, and has been the symbol of authority and responsibility on behalf of the village. Now, with the establishment of a police station, with the availability of more people who can write out complaints, with the decrease of the wealth of the village Omda, and consequently with his inability to provide hospitality in the traditional way, or to represent the village properly without extending his hands for help from the village, his authority has been flouted and people tend to send their complaints and disputes directly to the police station or to the provincial authorities. They complain that the Omda is not what he used to be in the good old days, responsible for reception and accommodation of government officials, generous to chance travellers, or to the needy poor.[1] In a conversation between the writer and the Omda, the latter answered the villagers' allegations by saying 'If the Omda or any other man in his position would stick to what these people expect from his generosity, he would run the risk of complete bankruptcy'. The decrease of the headman's authority reveals itself in the local remarks such as 'We have an Omda without land', or expressing their dissatisfaction with regard to some unsettled disputes, the villagers would say 'It is a village without an Omda'.

By the weakening of his position, the Omda has lost prestige and people compare him with his powerful and domineering predecessor 'during whose days no one could open his mouth' and 'no children could play about'. In fact, this brings us to the personal qualities of the present Omda who is actually a pleasant and genial personality. But the people think of authority as necessarily involving an assertion of power and domination. For the same reason people praised my informant Mahmoud when he was in office as head of the ghafeers. If one wields power, one must be powerful and forceful, the villagers say, otherwise one would not be respected and feared. Gibb and Bowen mentioned something similar to this attitude towards authority in the Arab provinces in the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth century. Al-Jabarti wrote: 'If the peasants were administered by a compassionate multazim, they despised him and his agents, delayed payment of his taxes, called him by feminine names. . . .' The prevalence of such a conception of authority confers privilege and prerogatives and is enforced upon the minds of the people by long centuries of misrule and oppression, supplemented by the religious habits of stoicism, passing into fatalism.[2]

The weakening of the role of leadership in the village is one of the main complaints that one quite often hears, either with regard to the prestige of the Omda, or with respect to the influence of the Arab councils or the relationship between the older and younger people. With disputes referred

[1] The tradition of hospitality in the village leads to the fact that bread and milk cannot be sold on a commercial basis without bringing shame to the seller. This tradition still persists while that connected with selling of milk is less rigidly observed.

[2] H. A. R. Gibb and H. Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, Vol. I, Part 1, p. 205.

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to and decided by a Government superior to local sanctions, the esteem of local institutions has been undermined and the traditional structure of authority has lost some of its grip.

If the villagers have increasingly resorted to Government procedures in their disputes, they still consider both Government and Government officials as agencies of imposition and control, and hence to be feared. The identification of any Effendi wearing European suit and fez with a policeman is indicative of the role of the Government in the people's mind. The first strong impact of centralized Government was probably during the reign of Mohammed Ali, when its pressures were felt through conscription, the rigid collection of taxes, and the registration of land. For a long time in Egypt this apprehension held towards the Government was connected with education, since education and conscription were associated during the days of Mohammed Ali, while hitherto war had been the business of a certain caste and farmers were not concerned with it. The fear of Government authorities is reflected in the story of the old man in the village who had been very annoyed and did not speak to his son for a long time because the latter was entangled in a dispute for which the father had to be called to the police station to give evidence. The father considered his going to the police station as a humiliation brought to him by his son.

It is also considered as a betrayal to report cases of infectious diseases to the authorities, as this would cause trouble to the family by involving the father and the mother in governmental queries and procedures. To keep away from governmental institutions was always the safest policy. An example of this is the failure of the branch of the Agricultural Credit Bank established in 1938 to help the farmers to have their crops secured, to borrow money accordingly, and thus to rescue them from falling a prey to usury. The bank has been in fact mainly used by outside crop merchants to buy crops from the village and store them until prices improved. It only functioned to its full capacity during the last war when governmental legislation compelled every farmer to sell part of his crop to the Government according to the land he cultivated. The villagers have never taken to the benefits of the bank, partly because it involved becoming implicated with Government procedures, and partly because it implied loss of prestige, due to dealing with interest, which is religiously forbidden. For the same reason, life insurance is never entertained by the villagers, nor by a great section of the Egyptian society as a whole, partly because it involves interest, as well as because it presents a challenge to man's destiny. In 1950 the branch of the bank in the village had to be closed down. Yet this does not mean that usury is not practised amongst the villagers in Silwa in spite of being condemned by the Koran, although it is not widespread and is avoided as much as possible.[1]

[1] M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, in talking about the Koranic prohibition of 'riba' (increase, interest) in Moslem society remarks that 'it was in that very society . . . that

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643 CHIEF EXECUTIVE--type of executive (e.g., paramount chief, king, president); plural executives (e.g., peace chief and war leader, king and chief priest, constitutional monarch and prime minister, triumvirate, executive council); authority (e.g., supreme, nominal, dependent upon personal qualities); prestige (e.g., sanctity of person, divine descent); functions (e.g., administrative, judicial, military, religious); prerogatives; symbols of office; mode of selection (e.g., by election, seniority, matrilineal or patrilineal succession); qualifications (e.g., age, sex, rank, wealth, prowess, piety); installation; termination of tenure (e.g., deposition, expiration of term, killing of divine king); etc. See also:

Executives and rule of succession in the family . 59
Executives and succession in kin groups 61
Dynastic lists and genealogies 173
Executives and succession in the community . . 623
Mortuary rites 784, 786

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In Egypt the productive area of about 11,000 square miles, representing a value of L.E. 435,000,000, is divided into State Lands (*miri*), entailed estates (*wakfs*) and private property (*milk*).

The State and the Land

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In 1813 Mohammed Aly, the founder of Modern Egypt (1769-1849), after seizing the possessions of the Mamelukes, divided their lands into village districts and distributed them to the villagers. Each cultivator thus obtained from three to five feddans in usufruct. Until 1840 he was subject to the system of monopoly. He had to deliver all his cotton to the Government dépot at an official figure lower than the market price. On grain, which he was allowed to sell in the free market, he had to pay a tax of 18 piastres an *ardeb*. According to Moslem law the Sovereign — formerly the Sultan, Commander of the Faithful, but now his emancipated Viceroy — remained sole owner, in God's name, of all conquered land. However, estates conferred by former Sultans on private individuals, or granted to tax-payer farmers, and also *wakf* property, remained outside his control. Moreover, vast areas still uncultivated were excluded from the survey, exempt (until 1858) from taxation, and allotted with full rights of ownership to notables, high officials, or members of the ruling house, who were in a position to bring them under cultivation. This is the origin of the large estates.

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Small property came into being by a slow process which began with the subdivision of the land. In 1846 a fellah enjoying the usufruct of a plot was authorised to part with it by title-deed, while still retaining without question his right to re-acquire it. In the same way, after eviction for arrears of taxes, if later he could pay off the debt he could take back his field. Later on the children of the usufructuary were allowed to take over their fathers' fields; but this was only by Government concession, not by right of inheritance.

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In 1871 Ismail Pasha, hard pressed by debt, offered full ownership of their plots to all tenants who would pay six years' taxes in advance. This law met with only partial success, and was repealed in 1880. But the principle of fellah ownership was established; and the Government con-

God being thus the sole owner, the beneficiaries of *wakf* lands enjoy their revenues, but cannot realise them. The Christians of the Oriental Churches have also followed this method of dealing with property, and today more than 610,000 feddans, or about a sixth of the cultivated area, are thus withdrawn from the market.

A Ministry of Wakfs has the task of administering these ancient Moslem bequests, and ensuring the fulfilment of the founders' wishes. But it is clear that these properties in mortmain, with no human landowner, are the least productive. However, for this very reason, owing to the lack of interest on the part of managers and agents, who are liberally paid out of whatever profits they make, the fellaheen on *wakf* lands have a fairly easy life.

Private Property

Official publications take a pride in pointing out that Egypt is a country of small landowners, and quote recent statistics in support of their claim. It is true that a million and a half fellaheen each own an average of a third of a feddan. Half a million more own from one to five feddans each, and about 150,000 own from 5 to 50 feddans. But these small farmers together do not possess more than half the cultivated land. In 40 years the area held by smallholders has increased by 850,000 feddans or 83%, while the number of the smallholders themselves has increased by 355% [18]. Thus, while on the one hand two and a quarter million fellaheen own less than two million feddans, on the other hand more than two million feddans are in the hands of only 12,559 landowners. Of these, twenty-three Egyptians and twenty-five foreigners own among them some three hundred thousand feddans.

The greatest landowner in the country is the King. The late King Fuad I, who at his accession in 1917 owned eight hundred feddans, had acquired twenty-eight thousand feddans by the time of his death in 1936. This figure does not include the revenues from forty-five thousand feddans of *wakf* land entrusted to his supervision. The estates of limited companies amount to a hundred and fifty thousand feddans. Egypt is still in reality a country of large landowners.

423 The great estates lie chiefly in Upper Egypt and in the
427 newly reclaimed areas of the Delta. They do not always remain under the same ownership, and certain estates have changed hands six times in twenty years, without, however, any variation in their methods of working.

The great landowners run their estates indirectly by the help of their *daira* and of *nâzirs* in the same way as companies such as the Kom Ombo Sugar Factories, banks such as the *Crédit Foncier* and the Land Bank, the large *wakfs* and the State Domains.

The *daira* is the town office for administration and accountancy. It makes orders and purchases, arranges advances and sales and pays the taxes.

The *nâzir*, a bailiff or agent, is the owner's representative on the estate and is the real executive, on whom the whole system depends for its working. He is as obsequious to his master as he is stern to the fellaheen. His business is to exert all possible pressure on the agricultural machinery, that is, the fellaheen, in order to increase the output. He is like a saw that cuts both ways, as his victims put it. He controls the ploughing, manuring, sowing and harvesting by a rule-of-thumb routine. However, landowners would rather rely on his experience than employ agricultural engineers, who are not yet taking the part for which they are qualified in Egyptian rural affairs.

● [443] On the State Domains and the estates of the King and Princes the management is more varied. The different services are grouped in a *tefteesh* or inspectorate, and installed in an *ezba*.

361 The *ezba* is an inseparable part of the larger estates.
656 It is a homestead for the estate workers, separated from the village, and constituting a hamlet which belongs entirely to the estate owner. This arrangement, which is less than a century old, was legally established in 1913, and modified slightly in 1933.

"No *ezba* may be established on any estate without the consent of the Provincial Council, which should take into consideration the extent of the petitioner's estate, its distance from the village, and the number of farm labourers to be housed there." For the law is still valid which forbids "the building, by whosoever it may be, of any manner of dwelling upon cultivated land outside the recognised village area".

427 ther shots had been fired into the air. Seven of the policemen
625 were wounded by stones thrown at them by the villagers.
579 Several villagers were arrested, and a judicial enquiry was
423 opened. This incident, which took place in 1936, is by no means abnormal. As is usual on such occasions, the landowner himself was absent.

423 The big landowner, even if he be of fellah origin — and
427 the proportion of land owned by native Egyptians is
369 ever on the increase — takes no interest in his *ezba* except as a source of income. Like the absentee landlords of Irish history, or the pluralist rectors of seventeenth-century England, he goes as seldom, and stays as short a time, as possible. He knows his labourers only by the cash which his *nāzir* sends him; their families he does not know at all. Of their lives and needs as human beings and members of society he is sublimely ignorant. For the big landowner is Europeanised. He lives in Cairo or Alexandria and spends the summer in Europe. Everyone knows how prodigal he is of his wealth, the wealth of Egypt. In one evening he will fling away enough to keep his fellaheen alive for a whole year. Their poverty and his own luxury seem equally natural to him.

565 Between his men and himself there is no sort of bond.
643 He has no traditions linking him to this or that village. In Egypt today there is no landed aristocracy, only an aristocracy of wealth; and wealth gravitates to the town.

It is related that on one of his visits to the country the late King Fuad stopped to witness the songs and dances which a few fellaheen had improvised for him by the wayside. A courtly minister was astonished at this condescension and said:

'What generosity, Your Majesty, to waste ten minutes like this!'

'But for these fellaheen, Your Excellency,' replied the King, 'you would not have an income of five thousand pounds, nor be either a minister or a pasha.'

565 Contempt for the fellah has become so deep rooted in the
369 minds of his 'superiors' that the very word has become the worst of insults. Call anyone 'fellah', and it is as if you had said 'lout', 'scum', or even worse. Among the rich there is often complete indifference to the fellaheen. For them

The Ministry of Public Works controls the irrigation of all cultivated land, settles the rotation of crops for each zone, watches over the embankments and canals, and, if the Nile threatens to break its banks, recruits the fellaheen necessary for their maintenance. 656

The Ministry of Agriculture regulates the acreage of cotton and rice, distributes and controls the selection of cotton seed, and levies the fellaheen needed to fight the boll worm or the locust.

The Ministry of Finance collects the land-tax through its *sarrafs* in each district, issues orders for seizures, buys cotton to maintain equilibrium in the home market, and by means of the *Crédit Agricole* attempts to systematise the finances of the fellah. 651 656 657

The Ministries of Education and Public Health oblige the fellah to improve his mind and his physique. 871

The Ministry of Justice, through the district courts, — and after agelong delays — condemns or acquits him. 692

The Ministry of National Defence arranges for his enlistment, or collects the exemption fine. 702

The Ministry of the Interior, acting in the common interest, supports all this network of regulations and so ensures order and public security. 656

The Government system in its present form is less than a century old. It was established by Mohammed Aly, and has changed little in its working since. He did not so much create the machinery which deals with the fellah as systematise it after the disastrous and arbitrary rule of the Turks and Mamelukes. The founder of the reigning House thus raised over the heads of the fellaheen a system of law and order which makes it possible for them, if not to progress, at least to live. 175 64

Let us examine this hierarchy from top to bottom, and consider the relations of each authority with the fellah.

First of all comes the King. The last two sovereigns (not to mention others) have sincerely desired the well-being of the fellah, and frequently given proof of this desire. Their Ministers, however, are often more occupied with politics than with government, and travel far more in Europe than in the 643 645